93-GS-79 VOTED: The Nineteenth General Synod adopts the resolution "A Call to Consider Issues Relating to Resolution 91-GS-67, Concerning the Gifts of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals for Ministry" as amended.

RESOLUTION "A CALL TO CONSIDER ISSUES RELATING TO RESOLUTION 91-GS-67, CONCERNING THE GIFTS OF GAYS, LESBIANS AND BISEXUALS FOR MINISTRY"

WHEREAS, some of the issues involved in Resolution 91-GS-67 have raised concern among many of us and are such that we have not been able to arrive at unanimity about them;

WHEREAS, Resolution 91-GS-67 has caused polarization within the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, Resolution 91-GS-67 calls for "disciplined dialogue in which the biblical and theological foundations for congregations to be open and affirming of gay, lesbian and bisexual people are prayerfully discussed";

WHEREAS, the need for articulating what we can affirm together about issues, while recognizing our differences, is critical for the unity of the church;

WHEREAS, some have felt that there was not time at the Eighteenth General Synod for Resolution 91-GS-67 to be prepared in such a way as to express sufficiently our common ground;

WHEREAS, Resolution 91-GS-67 was a reformulation by a General Synod Committee and this reformulation was done so as to say the opposite of the original resolution;

WHEREAS, we are grateful that the standing rules of General Synod Nineteen have been modified to guarantee consideration of the original intent of a resolution; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that in discussion of 91-GS-67 and related resolutions, all sides within the church have too often engaged in polemics which have not built up the church and we lament practices such as:

a) speaking of those who take an opposing view in a manner which is demeaning or exclusive;
b) focusing only on the most extreme statements made of opposing views; and
c) attempting to impose the will of one group upon others by questionable means in the conviction that all truth is on one side;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we confess that we all, of whatever point of view, have taken part in such practices, whether actively or by silent assent, and that they are destructive of our unity in Christ. We repent of such actions and call upon us all to engage in discussion about faithful discipleship in a manner more consistent with seeking the mind of Christ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we affirm the unity of the church as the body of Christ given by the will of God and established eternally in God's grace. We believe that the church does not consist merely of individual members or of their collective views. We affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord of the church and that the church is upheld by the Holy Spirit. We are united in Christ despite our differences and disagreements. We confess that we are bound together by Christ and that to break fellowship with one another because of our views is to cause a grievous wound in the body of Christ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod calls upon the members of the church to accept one another in the face of differences of conviction, show respect for one another as sisters and brothers in Christ, and act in ways that will build up the life of the community.

Subject to the availability of funds.

21. RESOLUTION "RE-EVALUATION OF THE SENTENCES OF BATTERED WOMEN IN US PRISONS"

Moderator Ruhe called Ms. Inez Luna, Chairperson of Committee Six, to complete the report of the Committee. Ms. Luna moved the adoption of the resolution "Re-Evaluation of Sentences of Battered Women in US Prisons." Ms. Luna yielded her time to Rev. Debra Valentine (MINN) who spoke in support of the resolution.

93-GS-80 VOTED: The Nineteenth General Synod adopts the resolution "Re-Evaluation of the Sentences of Battered Women in US Prisons."

RESOLUTION "RE-EVALUATION OF THE SENTENCES OFBATTERED WOMEN IN U.S. PRISONS"

WHEREAS, in Isaiah 42:6-7, we who believe are asked to "be a light to all peoples...to open eyes that are blind, to bring captives out of prison;"

WHEREAS, in Luke 4:18, Jesus calls us to minister to those who are in prison and to set at liberty those who are oppressed;

WHEREAS, theologically, true justice is in freeing the prisoner of sin, abuse, fear, and in freeing those who are in prison for actions deemed wrong by a society who mis-defines the crime;

WHEREAS, English law, which is the foundation of law in the United States, was designed for men and lacked protection for women against abusive partners;

WHEREAS, today in the 1990's women who have been battered emotionally and physically have become a national concern;

WHEREAS, impoverished and/or minority prison inmates, who make up a majority of the female prisoners in the United States, have little or no support in their defense;

WHEREAS, some women received stiff sentences in the early 1980's when courts rarely heard mention of battered women's syndrome and few lawyers offered a pleas of self-defense since a woman's action in response to chronic abuse might be an admission of a motive and thus a crime that was pre-meditated;

WHEREAS, few battered women who are incarcerated have criminal histories; few pose the risk of repeating their crimes; and lengthy incarceration of such battered women is costly and inhumane; and

WHEREAS, a pattern for "clemency" has been established by such states as Ohio, where former Gov. Richard Celeste in 1990 granted mass clemency for 25 battered women convicted of assaulting or killing the abusers in their lives, and in 1991 clemency for eight inmates was granted by Gov. William Schaefer of Maryland, sparking drives to review sentencing of battered women in 28 states;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Members of United Church of Christ churches join with appropriate groups in requesting the governors and legislators of their respective states to:

1. Re-examine evidence in original sentencing of battered women who fought back by killing or assaulting their abusers;

2. Seek out battered women prison inmates and, when appropriate, help them apply for clemency;

3. Create legislation to provide adequate funding of agencies that could facilitate justice for women who are incarcerated for killing or assaulting their abusers;

4. Contact their respective state Directors of Criminal Justice and request that justice be done by identifying battered women serving sentences for killing or assaulting those who battered them and by giving special consideration to them for early release, thus having a two fold effect:

   a. giving back the life of a person who is not a threat to society and

   b. facilitating renewal of broken families;

5. Contact their respective state Offices of Court Administration and request a sensitivity training program on battered women be given to all sitting judges who may hear such cases.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that United Church of Christ churches investigate the resources in their areas for serving the needs of imprisoned battered women;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Coordinating Center for Women, the Office for Church In Society, and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries resource this issue and facilitate the implementation of this issue in conferences.

Subject to the availability of funds.

22. RESOLUTION "JUST PEACE CHURCH OPPOSES NATO STRATEGY SHIFT"

Moderator Ruhe recognized Ms. Florence Karlstrom, Chairperson of Committee Seven, for the final item of business from this Committee. Ms. Karlstrom moved the adoption of the resolution "Just Peace Church Opposes Nato Strategy Shift."

Rev. Donald Freeman, Business Committee, reported that the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) churches have acted in favor of a similar resolution, and urged the delegates to join in solidarity by affirming this action.

93-GS-81 VOTED: The Nineteenth General Synod adopts the resolution "Just Peace Church Opposes Nato Strategy Shift."

RESOLUTION "JUST PEACE CHURCHES OPPOSE NATO STRATEGY SHIFT"

Background

Peace and Economic Justice was the theme for a 1992 Consultation of members of the Penn Central Conference and its partners in the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) in the Berlin-Brandenburg and Rhineland Regional Churches. They discussed the significance for today of the basic church documents: "Confessing for Peace" by the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic (1987) and the UCC Just Peace Pronouncement (General Synod 15, 1985) as well as the UCC Pronouncement on Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice (General Synod 17, 1989). Their common conviction about the "window in history" which is given "to take the way toward complete nuclear disarmament and toward overcoming the institution of war" led the partner churches to speak out against the strategy shift by NATO away from defense of Europe toward global military